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Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014)

I. Introduction

1. The present report is the eighteenth submitted pursuant to paragraph 17 of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014), paragraph 10 of Council resolution 2165 (2014) and paragraph 5 of Council resolution 2191 (2014), in which the Council requested me to report, every 30 days, on the implementation of the resolutions by all parties to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

2. The information contained herein is based on the data available to United Nations agencies on the ground, from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and from open sources. Data from United Nations agencies and partners on their humanitarian deliveries have been reported for the period from 1 to 31 July 2015, when available. More recent data have been included, when available.

II. Major developments

A. Political/military

3. Widespread conflict and high levels of fighting continued throughout the Syrian Arab Republic during the reporting period. Explosive weapons continued to be used, including in populated areas. Indiscriminate shelling and attacks by non-State armed groups,[1] extremist and designated terrorist groups and indiscriminate aerial bombings, including the use of barrel bombs, by government forces left tens of thousands of civilians dead, injured and displaced.

4. In Rif Dimashq governorate, government forces intensified their aerial bombardment of areas under the control of non-State armed groups. According to local sources, there was an average of nine aerial raids per day on the eastern Ghutah area during the Eid al-Fitr period (19-23 July), in particular on the city of Irbin, where some 15 people were killed and scores more injured. On 27 July, at least 15 civilians, including women and children, were killed and no less than

[1] On 30 May 2013, Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the Nusrah Front were designated as terrorist groups by the Security Council in accordance with resolution 1267 (1999). The two groups operate in the Syrian Arab Republic.

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40 others injured in Duma when government forces carried out six air strikes on a residential area, causing massive destruction to residential buildings. On 16 and 17 August, government air raids in Duma resulted in one of the bloodiest attacks since the conflict began in March 2011, killing at least 96 civilians and injuring more than 200 others. Meanwhile, government-controlled areas in Damascus were also subject to intensified shelling by non-State armed groups. On 4 July, for example, two civilians were killed and at least three others injured when mortar shells fell on Baghdad Street. Heavy fighting between government forces and non-State armed groups, including the indiscriminate use of weapons, was reported in the Jawbar district of Damascus during the last week of July, following an offensive by the groups, leaving civilians dead and injured. At the end of July, the Government reportedly prevented the movement of civilians and food from Tall and Qadsiya on the outskirts of Damascus.

5. Fighting among the Nusrah Front, Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and pro-government Palestinian factions continued inside and around the Yarmouk camp in Damascus during the reporting period. Reports indicated that government forces were continuing to carry out sporadic attacks with artillery and mortars on the camp, mainly around the front lines. On 14 July, a mortar attack allegedly killed a child inside the camp. Negotiations between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Nusrah Front to demilitarize the camp continued, but with no significant progress.

6. During the reporting period, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) remained extremely concerned about the safety and humanitarian needs of the thousands of civilians still in Yarmouk and the thousands more displaced to the surrounding areas of Yalda, Babila and Bayt Saham, whose situation neither improved nor diminished in terms of its urgency or gravity. The humanitarian and living conditions for Palestine refugees in Yarmouk and the neighbouring communities remained extremely dire. In July, there was an outbreak of typhoid, with tens of cases credibly reported, illustrating the worsening situation for the refugees and others still living in the area. In the last week of July, non-State armed groups imposed restrictions on the movement of civilians between Yarmouk and Yalda, Babila and Bayt Saham; they were subsequently lifted, but access beyond the neighbouring communities for residents of Yarmouk remained heavily constrained.

7. All UNRWA operations in Yarmouk remained suspended, with no missions possible during the reporting period. The most recent UNRWA mission inside Yarmouk was conducted on 28 March and its last successful mission to the surrounding areas of Yalda, Babila and Bayt Saham was on 7 June. Following several démarches, two most recently on 26 July regarding the typhoid outbreak and access to Yalda, the Syrian authorities granted UNRWA authorization to provide health care to civilians in Yalda, Babila and Bayt Saham on 11 August. The authorization was expressly linked to tackling the typhoid outbreak and did not permit the provision of food, water or other humanitarian services or supplies. While UNRWA access to the three communities has been curtailed since June, other humanitarian organizations have reportedly been allowed to continue their operations and deliver assistance there. For example, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent has reportedly been able to deliver assistance on a near-daily basis. According to community leaders in Yalda, the local agreement reached in the three communities

is holding and the Government has allowed up to 12 tons of commercial items to reach the area each day.

8. In the Qalamun region of Rif Dimashq governorate, government forces, backed by Hizbullah, continued to advance on the strategic city of Zabadani. Local sources in Zabadani claimed that it was under heavy bombardment and shelling, including with barrel bombs and missiles, on a near-daily basis. The Government and allied forces reportedly cut off all routes to the town and prevented the remaining civilians from fleeing and commercial or humanitarian assistance from reaching the area. The situation for the estimated 2,000 civilians in the areas under the control of non-State armed groups remained critical. Moreover, those displaced from Zabadani to the neighbouring areas of Mamoura and Bludan were reportedly told to move to Madaya. Government forces also reportedly fired on nearby towns, including Buqayn and Madaya, killing seven civilians. While initial ceasefire negotiations between the Government and non-State armed groups were unsuccessful, a temporary ceasefire was agreed upon early in August, but later violated before United Nations humanitarian assistance could reach the area. Nevertheless, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent managed to provide 3,000 bread baskets to Bludan and the same to Madaya on 15 and 16 August.

9. In Dar'a governorate, heavy fighting continued among non-State armed groups, the Nusrah Front and government forces. On 23 July, the groups began heavy shelling of Dar'a city. There are concerns for the safety of civilians remaining there, many of whom are unable to flee. Government forces counter-attacked by intensifying shelling on areas under the groups' control. Reports indicate that at least 60 people died in Dar'a city as a result of air attacks by government forces, including those employing barrel bombs and surface-to-surface missiles, in July. For example, government jets reportedly attacked the rural village of Yadodeh with missiles on 25 July, leaving nine people dead.

10. In the northern Syrian Arab Republic, fighting continued in Aleppo governorate on a daily basis. In the city of Aleppo, an alliance of Islamist groups, including the Nusrah Front, attacked government-controlled areas from several directions. Reports indicate that some 31 civilians were killed in those areas from 1 July to 13 August. For example, a rocket attack by non-State armed groups in Midan reportedly killed four civilians on 8 July, while five children were killed and two injured when non-State armed groups fired mortar shells on the neighbourhood of Shahba' al-Jadidah on 26 July. Meanwhile, pro-government forces continued to reinforce their presence in Aleppo, launching several attacks on areas under the control of non-State armed groups. For example, an aerial attack on 8 July on the Tariq al-Bab neighbourhood caused 15 casualties, including 6 children. On 21 July, at least 15 civilians were killed when government forces reportedly fired a surface-to-surface missile on the residential neighbourhood of Maghayer.

11. Pro-government forces continued to shell areas under the control of non-State armed groups elsewhere in Aleppo governorate. More than 200 people were reportedly killed, including women and children, in July as a result of air strikes, including with barrel bombs, on markets, schools and residential neighbourhoods. For example, the Syrian forces struck a building and an adjacent mosque in the Karam al-Baik district on 8 July, reportedly killing 15 civilians, including women and children. Between 11 and 17 July, government forces dropped barrel bombs on the town of Al Bab, reportedly killing more than 70 people. On 20 July, at least

21 civilians, including 1 woman and 2 children, were killed when government jets reportedly fired missiles on the rural town of Manbij. On 21 July, government forces reportedly dropped four barrel bombs on the ISIL-held rural village of Qasr al-Burayj, in the eastern part of the governorate, reportedly killing at least 19 civilians. Meanwhile, mortar shells fired by non-State armed groups on the besieged town of Zahra' on 1 July left a civilian dead.

12. In Idlib governorate, non-State armed groups continued their offensive on government-held Foah and Kefraya, reportedly in response to the offensive by the government forces and Hizbullah on Zabadani and the lack of progress in local ceasefire negotiations. According to reports, hundreds of rockets, mortar shells and other projectiles were fired against both villages. A child was reportedly killed and many civilians injured on 21 July as a result of the attacks. Local sources claimed that at least eight civilians had been killed since the beginning of the operation on 15 July. The situation for the estimated 12,500 civilians inside the two towns remained critical, although the Government was reportedly airdropping supplies. Meanwhile, several towns and villages controlled by non-State armed groups continued to be attacked by government forces, including with barrel bombs and missiles, leaving civilians dead and injured and some 75,000 people displaced. More than 70 people were reportedly killed in July as a result of the attacks. For example, at least 16 civilians, including 2 children and 2 women, were killed on 16 July when government helicopters reportedly dropped barrel bombs on the town of Ma'arrat Misrin.

13. In Homs governorate, fighting between ISIL and government forces intensified around Tadmur (Palmyra). ISIL attacked and gained control of two checkpoints around a government airbase, seizing a significant quantity of weapons and ammunition. Government forces continued their aerial bombardment of the city and the surrounding areas. For example, government helicopters reportedly dropped barrel bombs on the city on 28 July, killing a woman and her four children. In Homs city, there were reports of an increased number of attacks against pro-government districts using improvised explosive devices. Four incidents were reported in the Akrama and Nuzha districts in July. ISIL also launched offensives on Qusayr and the surrounding area in south Homs, as well as government-held areas around the Qaryatayn area in eastern Homs, from where some 20,000 people had been displaced by early August.

14. In the governorate of Hasakah, fighting between ISIL, Kurdish militias and government forces continued on the outskirts of Hasakah city and surrounding areas, causing death and injury. Government forces reportedly launched an attack, accompanied by intensified aerial bombardment, resulting in ISIL being repelled from the areas that it had gained since 25 June in the south-west of the city. Kurdish militias, backed by international anti-ISIL coalition air strikes, launched an offensive on ISIL positions in the south-east of the city, also causing the group to retreat. Its withdrawal prompted many of the estimated 120,000 people who had fled the city following the group's advances to begin to return to their homes.

15. In the governorate of Raqqah, ISIL launched an assault on the strategic city of Ayn Isa, in the Kurdish-controlled area north of Raqqah city. The Kurdish People's Protection Units managed to recapture the city. As at the end of July, they had reached areas less than 40 km from Raqqah city, including parts of the Hasakah-Raqqah road.

16. Civilian infrastructure continued to be affected during the reporting period. Water supplies were cut off eight times in July in Aleppo city by fighting, at times deliberately by non-government parties to the conflict, affecting an estimated 1.7 million people. In some neighbourhoods, the water was cut off for more than three weeks in July. In Dar'a governorate, conflict disrupted electricity and water supplies in Dar'a city and surrounding villages for more than 10 days, affecting some 300,000 people. On 14 August, non-State armed groups announced the total cut-off of the Wadi Barada springs, which supply water to Damascus, reportedly in retaliation for the offensive against Zabadani.

17. In July, several remaining cultural heritage sites were affected by the conflict. On 2 July, ISIL destroyed the famed statue of the Lion of Athena that was located at the entrance to the Tadmur (Palmyra) museum. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization World Heritage site of the old city of Aleppo also continued to suffer from fighting: on 12 July, an explosion near the citadel destroyed part of its defensive wall at its north-east side.

18. There were reports of negotiations on prisoner exchanges between the Government and non-State armed groups. In Idlib governorate, the Government released 16 detainees, with the Nusrah Front releasing seven families from Jisr al-Shughur in return. In Dar'a governorate, the Government released 42 detained women, while non-State armed groups delivered 11 bodies to government representatives.

19. During the reporting period, several local agreements between the Government and non-State armed groups came under increased strain. The security situation deteriorated in Mu'addamiyah, Rif Dimashq, with extensive shelling reported. There was very limited movement in and out of the area, with full restrictions being imposed on 11 August. In the Barzah district of Damascus, the non-State armed group negotiation committee stated that government forces had not allowed basic supplies to enter the district since the beginning of Ramadan, which had further worsened the already dire humanitarian situation inside the district and possibly endangered the agreement. In Homs city, negotiations to finalize the Wa'r agreement stalled over various issues, including the evacuation of those against the agreement. Government forces reportedly continued their military operations in the area, even though talks were continuing.

20. Following the Geneva consultations, which concluded in July and were aimed at making operational the final communiqué of the Action Group for Syria (Geneva communiqué), my Special Envoy for Syria announced during a briefing to the Security Council on 29 July that he and his office would continue their diplomatic efforts by establishing an intra-Syrian Arab Republic dialogue process, focusing on four key thematic working groups, among which humanitarian access would figure prominently.

B. Human rights

21. On 17 and 18 July and 10 August, the Syrian authorities bailed three prominent human rights defenders who had been detained since February 2012 on terrorism-related charges. The counter-terrorism court is scheduled to deliver a verdict in their cases on 31 August. The cases are emblematic of innumerable other cases of activists, lawyers and human rights defenders who continue to be detained

for exercising their right to freedom of expression and prosecuted in trials affording no judicial guarantees. Many detainees endure ill-treatment and torture and are held incommunicado for weeks, months or years.

22. In the governorate of Raqqah, two activists known for documenting ISIL abuses were executed by the group on 5 July following a summary trial. They were shot in the head. A video of the acts was released by the group. On 26 July, ISIL reportedly executed two homosexual men by pushing them, blindfolded, off the roof of a building in front of a crowd.

23. On 5 July, ISIL released a video purporting to show children whom it called the "Caliphate Cubs" appearing to shoot at least 25 government soldiers in the head in front of a crowd gathered at the site of the Roman amphitheatre in Tadmur (Palmyra).

24. On 3 July, Kurdish People's Protection Units entered the village of Shara in Hasakah governorate and reportedly shot dead three civilians for their alleged links with ISIL.

25. In Idlib governorate, a family of three, including a child, was killed on 12 July when a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device detonated close to their home in the town of Sarmin. Local sources claimed that the Nusrah Front had carried out the attack, although no group formally claimed responsibility.

26. In the governorate of Dayr al-Zawr, two women accused of "witchcraft" were beheaded by ISIL elements in the village of Sukkariyah on 8 July. A man was beheaded by ISIL elements on 21 July in the Aradi neighbourhood of Dayr al-Zawr city for blasphemy. The executions appeared to have followed what could be described as a summary trial.

C. Humanitarian response

27. United Nations humanitarian agencies and partners continued to reach millions of people in need in July through various means from within the Syrian Arab Republic and across borders, pursuant to resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014). The Government continued to assert that it was providing basic services to areas under its control and in many cases in areas beyond its control. The World Food Programme (WFP) delivered food assistance to 3.8 million people in 13 governorates. The World Health Organization (WHO) distributed medicines and supplies for 793,182 treatments in seven governorates. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reached almost 2.2 million people with water, sanitation, hygiene, nutrition, education and psychosocial support. Routine immunization and other health-care services also reached 335,647 children. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reached 158,912 people with core relief items and protection services. The United Nations Population Fund supported its partners to deliver reproductive services and services relating to gender-based violence to some 345,000 people in 12 governorates. The International Organization for Migration reached 15,699 people with multisector assistance. UNRWA provided support to more than 200,000 Palestine refugees.

28. Cross-border deliveries continued during the reporting period. As at 31 July, the United Nations and its implementing partners had sent 154 shipments — 105 from Turkey and 49 from Jordan — to the Syrian Arab Republic under the terms of

resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014). They included food assistance for 1.8 million people,[2] non-food items for some 1.4 million people, water and sanitation supplies for more than 900,000 people and medical supplies for some 2.2 million treatments in Aleppo, Dar'a, Hama, Idlib, Ladhiqiyah and Qunaytirah governorates. In line with resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014), the United Nations notified the Government in advance of each shipment, including details of content, destination district and number of beneficiaries.

29. The United Nations Monitoring Mechanism continued its operations in Jordan and Turkey. In July, it monitored 13 United Nations humanitarian shipments, confirming the humanitarian nature of each and notifying the Syrian authorities after each shipment had crossed the border. The Mechanism continued to benefit from excellent cooperation with the Governments of Jordan and Turkey.

30. No inter-agency convoys were conducted in July, but United Nations agencies did conduct some single-agency convoys across conflict lines. For example, WFP delivered food rations to support 78,500 people in Aleppo, Raqqah and Rif Dimashq governorates. WHO provided the local health authorities in eastern Aleppo and Dar'a with medical assistance for more than 107,000 people.

31. Both international and Syrian non-governmental organizations continued to deliver multisector assistance in July, including through the provision of ongoing services. Non-governmental organizations reached some 1.2 million people, including more than 450,000 people in Aleppo governorate, more than 250,000 people in Dar'a governorate and some 200,000 people in Idlib governorate.[3]

D. Humanitarian access

32. The delivery of humanitarian assistance to many of the 12.2 million people in need of assistance remained extremely challenging in July in many areas owing to active conflict, insecurity, shifting front lines and deliberate obstructions and interference by the parties, including restrictions on movements and burdensome administrative procedures.

33. Access to the 4.6 million people living in hard-to-reach areas remained of critical concern and very limited compared with the level of need. Most of those people were in ISIL-controlled areas, to which the United Nations had extremely limited humanitarian access. In July, United Nations agencies and partners reached 29 of the 127 hard-to-reach locations (23 per cent). They reached 9 locations with food assistance for almost 150,000 people, 19 locations with health support for some 140,000 medical treatments, 8 locations with water, sanitation and hygiene assistance for more than 440,000 people and 3 locations with core relief items for 9,330 people.

[2] In previous reports of the Secretary-General, the volume of food assistance was used to report on cross-border food deliveries pursuant to resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014). Henceforth, the number of people reached with food assistance will be used. Many of the people have regularly received food assistance.

[3] The figures are based on data provided by non-governmental organization partners. They represent a snapshot of the overall non-governmental organization response rather than a complete picture.

34. Continued conflict in several governorates hindered the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance and access to essential services during the reporting period. Conflict and insecurity prevented the delivery of life-saving food assistance to more than 1.2 million people in parts of Rif Dimashq and rural parts of Homs and Hama governorates. Meanwhile, the approved inter-agency airlift to Dayr al-Zawr did not proceed owing to the security situation around the airport in Dayr al-Zawr. A spate of mortars and rockets in Damascus resulted in the distribution of non-food items by UNHCR being postponed. In the governorate of Idlib, WFP was unable to reach some 60,000 civilians in Ariha and Jisr al-Shughur, in addition to the estimated 12,500 people in the government-held towns of Foah and Kefraya, surrounded by non-State armed groups. Owing to fighting and shifting conflict lines, access from inside the Syrian Arab Republic to the governorate has remained extremely difficult since April. Accordingly, United Nations cross-border operations into Idlib have been scaled up.

35. Deliberate interference and restrictions also continued to prevent aid delivery. WFP continued to suspend its food deliveries to 600,000 people in Dayr al-Zawr and most of Raqqah governorates, where access has been impossible since May and November 2014, respectively, as a result of the difficulty of delivering humanitarian supplies through ISIL-controlled areas. Similarly, WFP was unable to reach 175,000 people in ISIL-controlled areas of rural Aleppo owing to the inability to operate safely and independently. The Syrian Arab Red Crescent was, however, able to reopen its branch in Raqqah in July and deliver chlorine and water, sanitation and hygiene supplies. UNICEF delivered water treatment supplies to cover the needs of 2 million people for five months to the water directorate of Raqqah governorate for the first time in more than 18 months. Meanwhile, in Hasakah city, UNHCR received instructions from the Governor on 26 July to suspend distribution of assistance to internally displaced persons in order to encourage them to return to their homes. The Governor authorized the resumption of assistance on 31 July.

36. WFP transported no food assistance in July as a result of the temporary closure of the Nusaybin-Qamishli crossing by the Turkish authorities for part of the month owing to the increased insecurity in the north-eastern Syrian Arab Republic and delays in receiving approval from the Syrian authorities. As at the beginning of August, the crossing was fully operational and deliveries had resumed.

37. As at 31 July, of a total of 81 inter-agency convoy requests, 20 had been approved in principle by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, of which 9 had been completed and 1 had been partially completed. The second part of the convoy to Bludan was unable to go ahead owing to security concerns on the part of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. Of the remaining 10 requests approved in principle, 2 (Irbin and Zamalka) were held up by a lack of agreement between the United Nations, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and the Government on the access route, given that the route approved by the Government was considered unsafe by the United Nations. Planned convoys to Nubul and Zahra' and Afrin in Aleppo were held up by a lack of approval by non-State armed groups for safe passage. The convoys approved in principle by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Madamiyet, Rif Dimashq, Hula, Homs, and Harbnafsah, Hama, were unable to go ahead owing to the lack of approval by the government security forces. The remaining three requests approved in principle were at various stages of preparation. A total of 45 requests were awaiting government approval: 33 submitted on 1 July and 12 that remained valid. Three requests were put on hold by the United Nations owing to insecurity. The

remaining 13 requests were those that had previously been submitted but were then resubmitted because the original request had either been put on hold by the United Nations owing to insecurity (nine) or gone unanswered by the Government (four).

38. No major changes in the administrative procedures required by the Government for the delivery of humanitarian assistance were reported in July. The current procedures continued to delay or limit the delivery of assistance by United Nations agencies and partners, although UNICEF reported that the average time in obtaining approval to import humanitarian supplies had been reduced from 111 days in 2014 to 20 days in 2015.

39. As at 31 July, 69 United Nations visa requests (requests for new visas and renewals) remained pending: 33 within the limit of 15 working days and 36 exceeding that limit. Three visas were rejected during the reporting period, bringing the total number of visas rejected in 2015 to 36, exclusive of the four United Nations staff who were declared persona non grata in February. By comparison, 28 visa requests were rejected for the whole of 2014.

40. As at 31 July, 15 international non-governmental organizations had been approved by the Government to work in the Syrian Arab Republic. Such organizations continued to face administrative hurdles and restrictions that affected their ability to operate, including with regard to developing partnerships with national organizations, conducting needs assessments and opening sub-offices. Ten requests for international non-governmental organization visas submitted in July were granted, while seven others remained pending approval.

41. A new list of national non-governmental organizations authorized to partner with the United Nations was received on 12 August, increasing the number from 122 to 131 through 216 branches (up from 178 branches).

Besieged areas

42. Besiegement remains a pervasive tactic of war in the Syrian Arab Republic. Of the 4.6 million people living in hard-to-reach areas, 422,000 remained besieged: 167,500 by government forces in eastern Ghutah and Darayya; 26,500 by non-State armed groups in Nubul and Zahra'; and 228,000 people by ISIL in the government-controlled western neighbourhoods of Dayr al-Zawr city.

43. The parties to the conflict continued to heavily restrict access to besieged areas in July. The United Nations and partners reached 1.8 per cent of the besieged population with health assistance. No food or other type of humanitarian relief item reached any besieged area through official routes. The flow of commercial supplies through official routes remained largely blocked, leading to high prices for those commodities reaching besieged areas through unofficial and irregular supply lines, which compounded human suffering. Freedom of movement remained heavily restricted, although certain groups, such as students, civil servants and members of reconciliation councils, were occasionally allowed to leave and return to besieged areas.

44. In eastern Ghutah, some 163,500 people remained besieged by government forces. In July, UNICEF delivered, through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, medicines, paediatric kits and nutrition supplements for 5,000 children to Duma for the first time in more than 18 months, although the Government removed antibiotics and anthelmintics needed to treat infections. In addition, WHO delivered

500 treatments for dialysis sessions, 500 treatments for chronic diseases, 20 cholera tests and 7,500 syringes to Duma through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. The United Nations Population Fund, through its local partners, also reached Duma with health assistance for 750 people.

45. In Darayya, Rif Dimashq, around 4,000 people remained besieged by government forces. A UNICEF request for a cross-line convoy to provide assistance scheduled for 22 July was not approved by the Syrian authorities. People there have not been assisted by the United Nations since October 2012.

46. In Nubul and Zahra', some 26,500 people remained besieged by non-State armed groups. In July, WHO delivered medicines for 1,112 treatments to Nubul through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent.

47. In the government-controlled western neighbourhoods of Dayr al-Zawr city, some 228,000 people remained besieged by ISIL. In July, WHO, through its local partners, delivered 845 medical treatments, a wholly insufficient amount given the needs in the area and the irregular frequency of deliveries.

Free passage of medical supplies, personnel and equipment

48. Access to medical supplies and equipment remained restricted to some areas as a result of insecurity and access constraints by parties to the conflict. The security deterioration in many parts of the country limited the availability of life-saving health services, in particular in parts of Aleppo, Dar'a, Hama, Hasakah, Idlib and Rif Dimashq governorates. No surgical items were allowed into areas controlled by non-State armed groups during the reporting period from inside the Syrian Arab Republic, although WHO transported eight surgical kits in a cross-border convoy from Jordan. WHO requests to the Government to send medicines and medical supplies to six locations in Aleppo, Damascus, Idlib and Rif Dimashq governorates remained pending.

49. Attacks on medical facilities, ambulances and medical personnel continued in July. Physicians for Human Rights documented nine attacks on eight medical facilities by government forces using aircraft. Seven attacks used missiles and rockets and two used barrel bombs. Four attacks occurred in Idlib governorate, three in Aleppo governorate and one each in Damascus and Dar'a governorates. Physicians for Human Rights also documented the deaths of 10 medical personnel. Eight were killed by government forces and two by unknown forces. Nine personnel died from shelling and bombing and one was executed. Three deaths occurred each in Dar'a and Idlib governorates and two each in Aleppo and Damascus governorates.

Safety and security of staff and premises

50. On 3 August, a mortar landed on the Sheraton Hotel compound in Damascus, where a number of United Nations staff members reside. The parking area was also hit on 27 July by heavy mortars and rockets, wounding a guard and damaging six United Nations vehicles.

51. On 28 July, a non-governmental organization staff member was killed when two improvised explosive devices detonated in Qamishli city.

52. On 27 July, an explosion in the town of Jamaaya, Hasakah governorate, injured a person working for a UNHCR implementing partner.

53. On 4 July, a UNHCR armoured vehicle was hit by a stray bullet while parked at the Shahba Hotel in Aleppo, with reports of further stray bullets hitting the building. No UNHCR staff members were harmed.

54. A total of 34 United Nations staff members (28 from UNRWA, 3 from UNHCR, 2 from UNICEF and 1 from the United Nations Development Programme) continued to be detained or missing. The total number of humanitarian workers killed in the conflict since March 2011 is 78: 17 United Nations staff members, 45 Syrian Arab Red Crescent staff members and volunteers, 8 volunteers and staff members of the Palestine Red Crescent Society and 8 staff members of international non-governmental organizations. Of the 78, 11 have been killed since 1 January 2015.

III. Observations

55. There is a complete and utter absence of protection for civilians in the Syrian Arab Republic. The parties' total disregard for human life and dignity remains a defining feature of the Syrian conflict and continues on a daily basis with total impunity.

56. Indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks by all parties to the conflict, including through the use of barrel bombs and other explosive weapons in populated areas, remain by far the primary cause of civilian deaths and injuries. We have again heard of shelling of Damascus by armed groups and appalling reports of new air strikes on the besieged area of Duma. Attacks on civilians must stop. Violations of international humanitarian law by one party to the conflict cannot justify, in any circumstances, retaliation and violations of international humanitarian law by another party. The international community, and in particular the Security Council, must take immediate action to end the daily violations of international law and the killing of civilians.

57. I remain deeply concerned about the impact of the conflict on Syrian children and young people. Children continue to be killed, maimed and recruited by parties to the conflict. The school year in the Syrian Arab Republic and in neighbouring countries begins in only a few weeks, yet millions of Syrian children will remain out of school, without access to formal education. Every child in the Syrian Arab Republic today under 5 years of age knows only life in a war zone. With the continued attacks on schools, the lack of employment opportunities and the climate of fear to which young people are subjected, the idea of a lost generation of Syrians is becoming ever more the reality. This will have profound implications for years to come if it is not urgently addressed.

58. All parties to the conflict continue, unjustifiably, to deny access to humanitarian assistance, notwithstanding their obligations to allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access to all affected people. In particular, I am deeply concerned about the horrific conditions facing the 422,000 civilians who remain besieged. The quantity of assistance reaching the besieged areas is pitiful and wholly insufficient. The parties need to lift the sieges urgently. I also remain deeply concerned about the very limited assistance reaching the 4.6 million people

in hard-to-reach areas. I reiterate that arbitrarily denying humanitarian access and depriving civilians of objects indispensable to their survival, in addition to water and other essential services, constitute violations of international humanitarian law.

59. It is my hope that the recent visit of the Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator to the Syrian Arab Republic will have helped to resolve some of the significant access challenges that continue to seriously impede humanitarian operations and prevent civilians from receiving life-saving assistance. As needs continue to grow, it is vital that the parties allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded access to all people in need, wherever they may be located.

60. The Syrian Arab Republic remains the largest humanitarian and peace and security crisis facing the world today. Humanitarian action cannot be a substitute for political action. With more than one quarter of a million people having been killed and in excess of half the Syrian population having been displaced, the crisis represents a profound failure of diplomacy for the international community. The Syrian people deserve an immediate end to the violence and a negotiated political solution to the conflict.

61. I urge all parties to participate constructively in the working groups of the intra-Syrian Arab Republic dialogue process that are to be established by my Special Envoy. The process is intended to further narrow the existing gaps in the interpretation of the key elements of the Geneva communiqué and identify practical steps to implement it.